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A new emphasis on some old American affirmations

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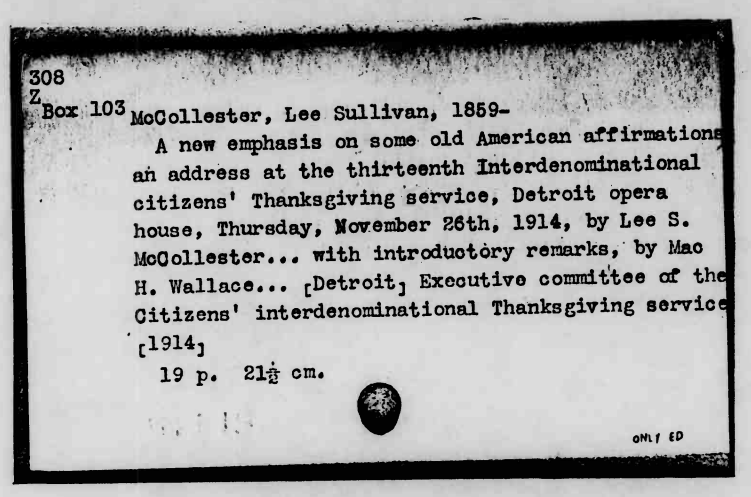
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A NEW EMPHASIS

ON

SOME OLD AMERICAN AFFIRMATIONS

A NEW EMPHASIS

ON

SOME OLD AMERICAN AFFIRMATIONS

AN ADDRESS

AT THE

THIRTEENTH INTERDENOMINATIONAL CITIZENS' THANKSGIVING SERVICE

DETROIT OPERA HOUSE

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH, 1914

BY

LEE S. McCOLLESTER

DEAN CRANE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
TUFTS COLLEGE, BOSTON

WITH

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

BY

MAC H. WALLACE

PASTOR BREWSTER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

DETROIT

PUBLISHED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CITIZENS' INTERDENOMINATIONAL THANKSGIVING SERVICE.

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OF

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A New Emphasis On Some Old American Affirmations

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

BY

MAC H. WALLACE

The subject which our good friend, Dr. Lee McCollester, has brought to us, and which has been adopted as the theme of this service, is a fitting one for Thanksgiving Day. For thanksgiving itself is an affirmation. Our united prayer today is more than a confession of our national sins; it is more than an entreaty for material blessings; it is a lifting up of the eyes to Almighty God that we may be given a vision of his wisdom, his holiness, his loving kindness. The creed which we unitedly confess here is not a denial but an affirmation. We reaffirm those principles of human brotherhood, freedom and justice by which our fathers builded so well; we reaffirm, also, our faith in God and in the eventual triumph of righteousness and peace on the earth. Moreover, each returning Thanksgiving brings with it a new interpretation of fundamental truth. The experience of the years is like climbing a mountain; the higher we ascend the broader is the vision. It is the same old world that lies about us; but we see farther and behold familiar things in their relation to the larger world. From the view point of this day we see more clearly than ever before our country's place among the peoples of the world and her mission in the plan of God.

As Americans we find ourselves members of a larger brotherhood. Recent world events have made us deeply conscious of one sacred fatherhood and have brought to us a patriotism that extends beyond our national boundaries. We can not believe that the foreigner is a natural enemy and that one nation can profit, in the long run, by the humiliation and impoverishment of other nations. We have awakened to the consciousness that the warring nations over the sea are a part

of our own world. Not only is our material prosperity bound up with theirs; but without them our national life would lack much of its richness and glory. Europe has been called the playground of America; but, truly, it is the fatherland of America. From those lands we trace our family descent and our national history. From them we have received our literature, our institutions and our religion. The scenery and romance of those lands, their cities and monuments and treasures of art belong to us. Their people, also, are our people. We may differ among ourselves as to the significance of what happened in Judea 2000 years ago; but we are certain that Europe today is a calvary and that there our elder brother is being crucified. So our neutrality is not an attitude of indifference; but a feeling of profound sorrow mingled with a sense of bereavement and national loss. More and more we are coming to see that the people of all nations are bound together by ties of a common interest and by a common purpose, and that the real enemies of any nation are injustice and greed, hatred and war.

We have come to a more intelligent devotion to our own country. Once the rights of the states were supreme in this land. Then it was a greater thing to be a Virginian or a Pennsylvanian than to be an American. But we have fought our battles for the Union and have learned well our lesson that the nation is greater than any of its states. But during the years there has grown up among us a sort of alien Americanism. Multitudes have come here from other lands and have drifted across the country from place to place. Representatives of different nationalities gather together to celebrate their anniversaries, to sing the songs of their fatherland and to keep alive their national spirit. This devotion to the lands of our birth is beautiful and right. But there are times when we are moved to inquire if we are really a people here or only a mixed multitude of Europeans abiding on American soil. But the soul of our patriotism has been awakened and today many who have counted themselves pilgrims and strangers in the land now thank God that they are Americans. One of our Swedish fellow citizens recently was speaking with feelings of deep affection of his native country; and concluding he exclaimed, "Sweden is my mother; but America is my bride." He spoke for millions of loyal Americans of foreign descent. Wherever they may have been mothered, America is their bride. If this is not our country, then

we have no country; it is here that we earn our livelihood; it is here that we rear our children; it is here that we are protected in our rights; and it is here that we owe a citizen's duty. If our children ever have a fatherland it will be America; if they ever have patriotic songs of their own to sing they will be "My Country 'tis of Thee" and "Michigan, My Michigan."

There has come to us, also, a broader charity. The old world is turning toward us in hope. It is the turning of the terrified to the serene, of the hungry and naked to them who have abundance of all things. America's answer is her ships speeding eastward laden with comfort. And these charitable fleets are more glorious than the navies on all the seas. Let us be grateful for bountiful harvests and increase in wealth because of the opportunity these give to help our neighbors in distress. But mercy is twice blessed; it blesses both them who receive and them who give. We have before us many disturbing questions. There are differences and contentions which rise like mountains between one class of our people and another, between one sex and another; if we can not break these barriers down we can leave them behind. In going forward in the high service of our fellow man, and uniting for the redemption of our common country we will one day find ourselves together in the peace of God.

A New Emphasis On Some Old American Affirmations

BY

LEE S. McCOLLESTER

DEAN OF CRANE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
TUFTS COLLEGE, MASS.

On this Thanksgiving Day, I desire to urge upon your attention certain national conditions and personal duties. It has seemed to me that I shall best reach the end I have in view if I present certain striking historical sentences belonging to the formative period of our nation and show where a new placing of emphasis makes modern an ancient phrase, makes operative an olden principle. There are four aspects of our national situation on which I wish to lay emphasis. They are:

1. America and Citizenship.
2. America and Industry.
3. America and the World.
4. America and Religion.

Or, stated as a proposition, the permanency and prosperity of this nation rest on:

The Americanizing of all citizens;
The fraternalizing of all workers;
The universalizing of all interests;
The spiritualizing of all individuals.

To establish my proposition, I shall quote four early affirmations, placing the emphasis so as to make the ancient phrase bear a modern message.

I.

The first affirmation I quote is from a dramatic scene in the year 1774 when the first Continental Congress met. On that occasion, men of the North and of the South met each other for the first time. They came together to get acquainted

and to talk over plans for the later organization of a central government. Among those present were Sam Adams, John Hancock, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry. Disasters threatened them. Necessity drove them to consider what they could do in order to protect one another. They felt the meaning of Franklin's witticism, "We must all hang together, or we shall all hang separately." It was after long deliberations over the seriousness of the situation that Mr. Henry said, "The distinctions between Virginians and Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers and New Englanders, are no more. *From this time forth, I am not a Virginian, I am an American.*" In those days, there were only thirteen colonies, but their loyalty to common ideals was fundamental to both national and personal prosperity. We are forty-eight states and several territories. In our big cities forty or fifty dialects are spoken. In all walks of life are men representing all the foreign nations. There are differences of temperament and taste as well as of tongue and color. There is no land where so many diverse elements meet on a common level and have rights to their individual freedom. If loyalty to certain national ideals and certain customs was needful in our early years, how much more is it needful, in this present complex state of society. We are not the same nation as we were in 1776. From that time to this, we have been developing standard ideals and definite Americanisms. We are not like any other nation. There is a difference between the Republic of France and the Republic of America; between the freedom of the individual in Russia and the freedom of the individual in the United States. The United States stands for definite ideals of freedom of speech, of equality of privilege. Speak the word "America" in any land and it means to all who hear a something better than any other nation has. Patrick Henry

said, after discussing the problem of that day, "From now on, I am first of all an American." I quote his sentence only to change the emphasis to the modern need. Into this country have come English, French, German, Italian, Russian men and women. Naturally, they love their old homeland. Naturally they take its side in the national controversies, but it should also be known that, when they accept the privileges and the protection of this nation, they thereby throw their fate with this country and the ideals they find here and that both a moral and a civic obligation rests on each one to recall Patrick Henry's words, "I am no longer a Virginian, I am an American," and place the emphasis thus, "I am no longer an Englishman, or a Frenchman, or a German, or an Italian; I am an American." And this means not only a willingness to take all that this rich land has to give, but to give to it all that lies in one's power. The immigrant should come here, not to be a parasite, fattening off the work of other men; not to be a canker imparting poison to healthy American ideals; not to be a disturber of the peace; or a seeker for self. Cordially does this country welcome the strong, constructive qualities of other races. The blending of blood, temper, and of experience, coming here from all nations makes for a richer America, and a world type citizen.

II.

In support of my second proposition, that a need of today is a "Fraternalizing of Workers," I quote from the preamble of the Declaration of Independence these words, *"We hold that all men were endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."* This was given as a charter to individuals of freedom to pursue their natural desires, but it is more than

that. In these days of complex conditions, we place the emphasis on a broader liberty than even our fathers had in mind. Theirs was a liberty for religion and politics and the simple life.

In different periods the content of liberty has been extended. This was the case at the close of the war when Abraham Lincoln repeated these words in the closing of his Gettysburg speech. For, when, with an emphasis born of his times, he said, "We are resolved that the people shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government by the people, for the people and from the people shall not perish off the face of the earth," he was thinking of falling chains and decaying auction blocks and negroes as freemen.

We today have to place the emphasis on a liberty for workers,—for all sorts of workers. There is a conflict on in the realms of labor and capital. It is not many years ago since one of your citizens said to me,—"There is surely, and soon, coming the greatest and most bloody warfare of human history, viz., that between labor and capital." There have been bitter labor wars. Some are still going on, but there is no probability of a general war. Men are coming closer together. They are seeing that the way to prosperity is not by competition, but co-operation. They are seeing that every man should have the right to sell his labor where he will; and every man the right to buy labor where he will. I am a believer in unions and in organization as means to promote efficiency, but it is un-American for a labor organization to say "only those who join my union may work,", and it is equally un-American for capital to say, "a man who is a member of a union shall not, because of that, work for me." This country recognizes the unalienable rights of both labor and capital, and

it demands not a limited brotherhood, but a universal brotherhood. Business must recognize the moral obligations born of humanity. More fundamental than likeness of race is the brotherhood of all men. Human brotherhood is not to be legislated into existence. It has existed from the beginning. As gravity was existing before Newton announced its laws of operation, so the brotherhood was before Jesus stated the second commandment. Still further, wages and hours are not the whole of the problem. We have before us the fact that every man should have a chance to realize his personality, whatever his work. Just as there is an American ideal of citizenship, so there is an American ideal as to the rights of labor and as to the true type of a workman. This American ideal is not the one some would force upon us from Europe; nor that which labor or capital would force on us when working only for their selfish gain. America has always been working for some form of freedom, and it has won its ideal sooner or later. It worked for freedom from foreign control; for freedom from human slavery; for freedom from religious dogmatism; and now it is working for freedom from domination by labor and by capital. Some of these ideals we have realized; others we are going to realize.

As I stand here in this city today, I want to commend certain of Detroit's progressive movements and certain steps taken both by men in labor and by men in management, towards the ideal. My knowledge of Detroit goes back twenty-five years. At that period, I met young men just starting in banks, shops, stores and law offices. I have had a continuous acquaintance with those men. We all grew along together. Those young men have become judges, merchants, heads of great factories, and experts consulted by trade and government. In all of this long training of the years, I have seen these

men constantly planning and working for freedom in labor. They have accomplished much. As a result of their leadership, Detroit is known over the country as the "Open Shop City of America," and men from many states are looking to Detroit and its strong men in management and in shop, to lead forward the struggle for freedom and fairness in labor. The most precious gift America can give its people is the chance for a man to realize his whole self and from this ideal America will never let either labor or capital hold back its citizens.

III.

Today, we cannot forget that the greatest war of the world is going on in the most civilized centers of the world. In speaking of this, under the caption of "The Universalizing of all interests," I quote words spoken by George Washington while he was president. *"Peace with all the world is my sincere desire."* I would have men today quote this phrase rather than the one which some war loving politicians delight in quoting, "To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace." This might have been true once, but it is not so any longer. I am sure that were George Washington on earth and studying the exhibitions of militarism, he would say, "TO PREPARE FOR WAR IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTUAL WAYS OF STIRRING UP WAR." I ask you, where in any age have countries so zealously raised and equipped armies as the countries now in bloody conflict? Did their Krupps guns, their Seige cannon, their Dreadnoughts, and their perfect tactics make for peace? Did their preparedness prevent attacks? If Germany, Austria, France, England and Russia had had last May, no armies and navies there would now be no war. Having them, like a boy with a new shot gun, they were not content until they had fired them,—and now all con-

testants are sorry, the world is grief stricken, business is paralyzed, and religion is wondering! Later on, generals may say, "It was a famous battle," but widows and orphans will ask, "What was the good of it all?" But more is true. America has had peace more than any other nation because it has always been better prepared for war than any other nation, but its preparation has been through the education it has given the people in the ideals of peace. This nation holds a unique place among the nations. It is unique because of its location. It is unique because it is made up of many states all cooperating for the good of all. There was a time when the thirteen colonies talked of being separate nations, and there was a time when North and South came near being two nations. This country is unique because it has for over a century been developing ideals that are inconsistent with, nay, antagonistic to the war idea. There loom high the ideals of education, of free speech, of government of the people, by the people, and for the people, of industrial prosperity, of united homes, of a religion of service and humanity. We hold a unique place among the rest of the nations because thus far we have prospered without big armies. Since we became a nation, we have fought no long wars for territory. All our wars have been for humanity, and war ended, we have laid down the gun and taken up the spade. Are we now to be frightened because cannons boom on the other side of the ocean? Are we going to say that Germany and England have better ideals for them than we have for ourselves? Are we going to say that our ideal has failed? Are we going to say, at this critical moment, that we yield to the ideals of Europe? In other words, are we going to lead, or be led? Are we going to fail or succeed? These are critical times. It is easy to be overwrought so as to do the wrong thing. It is

easy to do the rash thing and not be able to undo its consequences. We now need to stand by our best ideals. We now need courage and poise. Our only way to lead the nations is to reaffirm our principles. If now we falter, we have failed. I like to think that America was meant by God to perform a special service to the world. It has done some of its work. In many ways, it has set ideals and reforms for the world. This nation has been made by the gifts of all nations. We have developed our ideals out of all races. We are at the point when the way to make ready for peace is to lift higher our ideals of peace, not our cannons of war. Other nations will admire such loyalty to our convictions and we shall lead the world for peace as in no other way. This is our time to stand, not by our guns, but by our principles. This is the time to spike our cannon and not our principles. This is the time to talk, not navies for protection, but manhood, fraternity, and justice. Some have been saying, How has religion failed,—how has Christianity lost its gains for peace? This war is not the failure of religion. This war is upon us because nations put their faith in guns and not in the beatitudes. This war is a rebuke to the world that men and nations have not been brave enough to follow their religious ideals. Has peace failed? Peace has been denied a chance to show what it could do for mankind. To me, this war seems to be no other than an evidence of the departing glory of the old God of war. He has been a splendid martial figure in the world's history. There was a time when his kind of work was needed; when brawn was master of brain; when might made right. He stalked a mighty figure across the field of human history. He hewed his path with the sword and laid its dust with human blood. It was the thing to do. Body was King, not Soul.

But now, he is getting old. His armour is clumsy. His weapons are destructive in an age that demands everything to be constructive. His spirit is cruel in an age when men shudder at even the accidental shedding of blood. His martial footfall wakens along his path no glad huzzas. The old glamour that used to attend the war of nations is gone. He is now bereft of the poet of war. Unlike every other age, no great poet today sings of the glory of war. The muse waxes tuneful only on themes of peace and kindness. On the battlefield a new and youthful figure has risen to debate leadership. The world again looks on at the David and Goliath contest. Old war is contending with young peace. One is desperate, it must win once more and now, or lose power forever. The other is patient. Steadily has peace grown in strength and influence. It never was so in power as now. Never were soldiers so loath to fight. Never were so many nations so strong in denouncing war as hell. Never were so many interests of happiness being hurt. Let war wear itself out, let Peace rule over all the world, and let all races realize that the world is a nation of many states working together for universal happiness and progress.

IV.

The fourth aspect of the subject is the spiritual one, and for this I quote the opening sentence of the Mayflower Compact. The Pilgrims left the old country seeking a place where they might live and develop as seemed best to them. Among them were some who fully realized that development, even along right lines, must be well organized. So it was that the Pilgrim leaders brought the whole ship's company together in the little cabin as they lay at anchor behind the hook of Cape Cod. For

sixty-three days, these people had voyaged. Storms and accidents had afflicted them.. As they came now to shore, winter, the wild winter of New England, met them. Behind them, the sea, ahead of them, the rocking, snow-covered pines. They were of serious mind. In that mood, they drew up the Mayflower Compact. It was to be a general agreement that they would live together in orderly manner. They did not know they were preparing the way for the Declaration of Independence, or laying the foundation of the Constitution of the United States, but so they were. The first words of their Compact were solemn and prophetic. They were, "*In the name of God, Amen.*" Today, I am not interested in what came after that sentence. I am impressed with the solemn logic of those founders of this country. Their first emphasis was on the fact of fundamental and final authority,—"In the name of God, Amen."

What a contrast in this country between November, 1620, and November, 1914. The Pilgrims saw rocks, forests, Indians. We see a great nation stretching from sea to sea, one hundred millions of people. We see a wonderful material civilization. Spread out before us are "the works of our hands." Our works are bombs to kill, and antitoxins to make alive; aeroplanes and autos to eliminate distance; buildings reaching to the sky; canals joining oceans,—everywhere the works of our hands. This is a marvellous age. But where does God come in? Where does serious thinking come in? Where comes in the attention to self-fulfilment? Where the reverence for things holy and eternal? The question before us is, have we a properly balanced civilization? Or, have we a one-sided civilization? Have we left God out of our civilization? To some it seems so. Perhaps if

William Brewster, who on the Mayflower wrote these words, were to come back and look on the works of our hands, he might say so. Sometimes it seems to all of us as if men love only material things and that spiritual things have no place in their program of life. It is even too much so today. But there is such a spiritual or humanistic move, even in this dominantly material age, as the world never saw before. Education, which has been both materialistic and selfish, feels it. Men who have sought college so as to be able to get better positions and to make more money, or so as to be in the select class of scholastics are feeling " a spirit within." Recently, I was at a gathering of the college presidents of New England. Seventeen were present. In their utterances, they laid emphasis on two things:—on character values in education and on more service among college men for social welfare.—Cultivate the brains of men, but also their sense of honor, duty, service and reverence.

In recent years, while theology has been undergoing radical changes, the church has been making a fad of its service for the bodies of men. It has been making practical philanthropy even a substitute for worship. Recently, I was at the dedication of the $400,000 plant presented to Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, in memory of Henry Ward Beecher. The emphasis of Lyman Abbott, Dr. Gunsaulus, Dr. Hillis, and all was on the balancing of social service by religious worship. Man has hunger and nakedness of body but also of soul. Both need their share of attention. Trade also has been materialistic but even here there are new signs. "The Soulless corporation" has been a favorite fling. Yet several times lately have I been called into earnest conference with men of large interests to discuss methods of welfare work for their men.

I congratulate Detroit on the men it has had and has who devote some of their time to thinking about and working for moral welfare and the higher standards of living. You have done well, and your work has been an effective way of putting God into life. God is expressed in work honestly done as well as in prayers reverently said.

But material prosperity has traveled in this city at a fast pace. Pleasure is rampant. This city has had marvellous material progress. Your young men and young women need still more attention. This high degree of your material success calls on you for a still more careful attention to such instruments and institutions as shall develop interest in the things of the higher life if you are to continue a successful city. The appeal today is to the leaders to do more work and to the thoughtful to become new leaders. No modern city is to realize its ideal fully. But its citizens must by religion and social service at least strive to maintain a reasonable balance on the side of reverence, purity, sobriety, sympathy, fairness:—to deepen in the thoughts of old and young a sense of the fundamental and eternal forces at work in civilization, to put God where the Pilgrims put him, first.

Finally, I revert to my original proposition, viz., "The permanency of this nation rests on:—

The Americanizing of all citizens, making them loyal to our highest ideals.

The fraternalizing of all workers, making them a union of brothers as well as laborers.

The universalizing of all human interests, making a bond of peace to hold in one union all nations.

The spiritualizing of all individuals, making the highest things the things of first consequence.

It is a great proposition, so great that some feel doubtful. But the feeling of the seer today is that which Franklin had when the Constitution was at last signed. For many days, that notable company of men had been discussing the Constitution. Often it had seemed doubtful if agreement could be reached. But at last it was reached. All had signed. Then Washington began to rise from the chair which he had occupied. The chair in which he had been sitting was a quaint high-backed one, and on the back over his head was the figure of a half sun—with brilliant rays of gold darting forth on all sides. As Washington began to rise, Franklin, always observant, always humorous and yet always serious, said,—"for several days I have been looking at that figure of the sun and its spreading rays—wondering if it was a setting sun or a rising sun; wondering if it portended our rising or our setting as a new nation. Today, I know that it is the rising sun, and that this new nation is to advance towards a glorious midday of glory."

Friends, it is not on a setting civilization that we look today. There may be wars, poverty, dishonesty, hypocrisy, but nevertheless, we look on a rising civilization where freedom, justice, peace, brotherhood and reverence shall grow from more to more until the light of the perfect day shines full and steady.

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